

Our Voices Are Powerful

Advocate at Each Step

The Idea Stage

Before the bill is even drafted

Repeat

Repeat in opposite chamber

Committee

Getting the bill out of committee

Gov Signs

After passing both chambers in the Legislature.

Floor

Getting the bill off the floor

After It's Law

Is the bill working?

Track Your Bill: leg.wa.gov

- See important dates (including public hearings, executive action, pulled from the Rules Committee, and voted on the floor)
- See important documents: the actual bill, amendments and if they were adopted, and the bill report, which includes the legislative history, background, a summary of the bill, who testified on the bill, and a summary of the testimony for and against the bill.
- See sponsors and who has voted for and against the bill at each point in the process.



Cutoff Dates

Legislatively determined dates when a bill must be past a certain point in the process in order to remain eligible for action by the body on the floor. Six dates establish when a bill must be voted:

- out of the policy committee in the originating chamber,
- out of the fiscal committee in the originating chamber,
- off of the floor in the originating chamber,
- out of the policy committee in the opposite chamber,
- out of the fiscal committee in the opposite chamber,
- off of the floor in the opposite chamber.

Pro Tip!

Stay in contact with the prime sponsor of the bill and with other stakeholder groups that are advocating for the bill. Be sure to watch what opponents are saying about the bill.

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Bill Process

1. Bill Introduction

Bill numbered. First Reading.

2. Committee Hearing

Public hearing and testimony.

3. Committee Action

Committee passes or rejects. Executive Action.

4. Fiscal Committee

If it costs or saves WA state money.

5. Rules Committee

Before going to the floor. Rules Pull.

6. Floor Action

Voted on by the chamber. 2nd reading and amendments. 3rd reading. Final passage.

7. Opposite chamber repeats process

8. Concurrence/Dispute Process

Resolving differences between the two chambers

9. Bill Signing

Arrives at the Governor desk for review. The Governor may decide to sign it, veto a section of the bill, or veto all of it.

Did you know?

WA State operates on a **biennium**. Our Legislative cycle is two years long.

Long session: 105 days

Short session: 60 days

If the Legislature has not concluded its activity during a normal session, another legislative session, called a **special session**, can be convened. It can only be a max of 30 days, but multiple special sessions can occur.

Key Terms

- **Budget proviso:** Language in budget bills that places conditions on how funds are used.
- **Christmas tree bill:** An internal and informal term to describe legislation that aims to do one thing, but many more topics get amended on to it during the legislative process.
- **Concurrence process:** When a bill has been amended by the opposite house, the originating chamber has to decide whether to concur with the amendments or not.
- **Conference committee:** During the concurrence process, if the chambers are unable to come to agreement over amendments to the bill, members from each chamber can choose to form a formal conference committee to meet, discuss the differences and come to an agreed-upon compromise which becomes the conference report for the bill. The conference report must be voted on by each chamber, for or against as it is written.
- **Engrossed bill:** A bill where floor amendments were adopted and incorporated into the body of the bill text.
- **Executive sessions:** Where a committee votes to recommend a bill be passed with or without amendments to the full chamber for floor action.
- **Filing:** When a bill receives a number and is sent to the appropriate policy committee for a hearing.
- **First reading:** When a bill is introduced and referred to a committee.
- **Prefiling:** Members can prefile bills for introduction in the month before session begins. When a bill is filed it receives a bill number. The bill is not officially introduced until the first day of the session and then it is sent to the appropriate policy committee.
- **Public hearings:** The point during committee action where the public is invited to sign in and provide testimony on a particular bill.
- **Second reading:** After the bill is voted out of committee, it is sent to the full chamber with committee recommendations on what to do with the bill. Then the entire chamber discusses the merits of the legislation on the floor, and amendments to the bill are adopted or rejected by the full chamber.
- **Substitute bill or striking amendment:** A way to amend a bill in its entirety or to do many small amendments all at once. The substitute bill or striking amendment will replace the entire bill with a new bill. This is in contrast to a single "page and line" amendment which will only amend a few words or sentences of the underlying bill and will specifically state the page and line of the bill on which the amendment begins.
- **Sponsor:** A legislator that has introduced a bill. The first sponsor listed is the "prime sponsor" and all other sponsors are considered "co-sponsors" of the bill.
- **Third reading:** During floor action, the point in the process when a bill is considered for final passage. No amendments may be considered during third reading.
- **Work group or task force:** If a bill or a topic needs to be workshopped further, legislation can require a group to convene and study the issue. This allows the conversation to continue in a formal setting after the legislative session is over and develop new policy options for the next session. The legislation can establish who is a part of the task force, how many times it meets, and what type of report the group must produce.
- **Work sessions:** During committee action, where a committee explores and discusses issues that may or may not be the subject matter of a bill and where experts are often invited in to present to the committee.
- **X-file:** The Rules Committees may place bills in the Rules Committee that will go no further in the process in the "X-file" so that the bill does not show up as eligible to be pulled to the floor.
- **Zombie bill/NTIB:** Technically NTIB stands for a bill that is "necessary to implement the budget" but often is used as shorthand term to all those bills that are not subject to cutoff dates because of their budgetary impacts (i.e. the bill is literally necessary to implement the budget or it raises or lowers state revenue). Sometimes these bills may also be referred to as "zombie bills" because they are the bills that can't die due to cutoff deadlines.